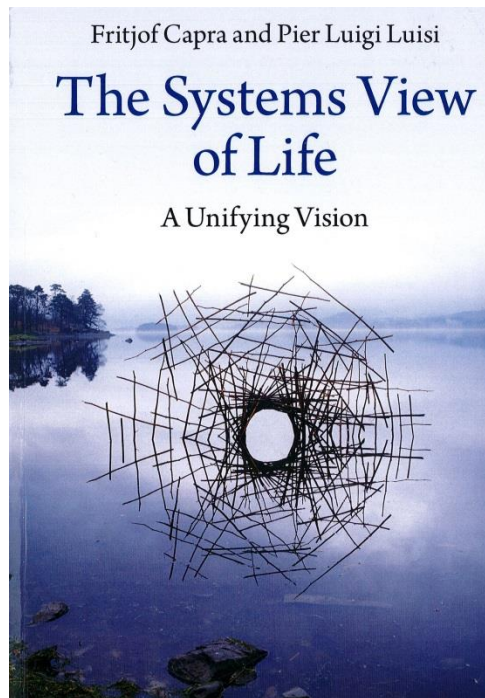


book review by john varney

The Systems View of Life

– A Unifying Vision

Fritjof Capra and Pier Luigi Luisi
Cambridge University Press 2014



From the perspective of two scientists – Capra the physicist and Luisi the biologist – we are given a sweeping, comprehensive and insightful overview of the history of western scientific thinking, from its origins in Newtonian thought through to our current fragmentation of everything. Similarly we review the evolution of systems thinking. Onto this background and supported by guest essays from diverse experts, we gradually build an understanding of the way in which life has evolved on planet earth and the whole systemic interconnectivity of all living beings.

From this standpoint we come to see quite clearly that humanity needs to be less mechanistic and reductionist in favour of organising organically (holistically) – like living systems.

It is surely clear that more of the same way of thinking will not bring new solutions to our ever increasing problems; that denying that humanity is out of its depths and destroying its own environment is supreme folly; that politicians around the globe are taking us to the brink (and beyond).

Having shown us the way current thinking is taking us, the book culminates with a vision of what sustainable living might look like. Although the seeds of sustainability are with us today, humanity is in the grip of a world view that fails to make connections. A new philosophy and a good deal of humility is required if we are to wrest our future from the powers that be.

This book was published in 2014 and its sub-title “A Unifying Vision” is more pertinent today than ever. It should be read by everyone in a position of power or responsibility and especially by so-called world leaders. As that is unlikely it behoves the rest of us to read and understand so that we might influence the shape of the future – or else it may be a short one!